



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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CONTACT:
MICHELLE MOWERY JOHNSON
(615) 313-4707/OFFICE

TENNESSEE EARNS HIGH MARKS IN NATIONAL CHILD CARE REPORT CARD *BACKGROUND CHECKS, NUMEROUS LICENSING VISITS CITED FOR KEEPING KIDS SAFE*

NASHVILLE, Tenn.— The National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRA) has released its report card on the state of child care in the U.S., and Tennessee now ranks third in the nation, behind only the Department of Defense and the District of Columbia. The report, entitled “We CAN Do Better,” is a detailed study which reviews standards and oversight that promote health, safety and school readiness of our young children. Tennessee moved up several slots, having been ranked 7th in the 2007 report.

“I’m proud that our Department of Human Services keeps such a close eye on its youngest and most vulnerable citizens,” said Governor Phil Bredesen. “Because of their hard work, our children are safe, healthy and ready for school when they leave their child care setting.”

It’s been nearly 10 years since the tragic deaths of two infants in sweltering child care vans in Memphis. These deaths were the reason for the state’s child care licensing program overhaul. DHS now has some of the toughest and most extensive licensing regulations and oversight of any state.

Tennessee also has an effective and much lauded rated licensing system. The Star Quality Program helps ensure that the 3,300 DHS-licensed providers in Tennessee meet or exceed basic minimum licensing standards. Those exceeding routine health and safety requirements are eligible to earn one, two or three stars. As of January 2009, there were 1,792 three-star agencies, 541 two-star agencies, 42 one-star agencies and 492 zero-star agencies. Agencies cannot earn a star until they have operated for one year. Some choose not to participate in the Star Quality program, but they all must undergo an annual assessment.

“The majority of child care providers in Tennessee are doing exceptional work,” said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. “Their commitment to the well-being of children in their care, dedication to quality, and willingness to learn and improve the job they are doing is a testament to them.”

The NACCRA report looks at several regulatory and quality areas, including criminal background checks, staff training, ratio and group size and parental involvement. In Tennessee, child care agencies receive numerous monitoring visits each year to ensure ongoing compliance with licensing regulations (at least one a quarter). There is also one announced regulatory visit and one quality assessment each year. Agencies are also visited by licensing staff any time a complaint is filed.

For more information on NACCRA or to review the “We CAN Do Better : 2009 Update” report, visit:
<http://www.naccrra.org/>

For more information on DHS and its child care program, visit: <http://state.tn.us/humanserv/> or to find your local Child Care Resource and Referral Center visit: <http://state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/ccr&r-listing.pdf>

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CITIZENS PLAZA, 15TH FLOOR
400 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TN 37248
615.313.4700